Claims

1. A machine-based method comprising
analyzing an e-mail message to derive response
information concerning a commercial transaction, and
based on the derived information, and
automatically generating commercial transaction data
in a format that is usable to automatically complete the

commercial transaction.

Į.

į

1.1

4 17

6

7

8

10

11

1

2

3

4

5 6 2. The method of claim 1\in which the commercial transaction comprises an order for a product or service.

3. The method of claim 1 in which the e-mail message comprises at least part of an e-mail sent to a customer and responses of the customer to the e-mail.

The method of claim 1 in which the automatic completion of the commercial transaction comprises order fulfillment.

5. A machine-based method comprising sending an e-mail message to a customer offering a product or service for sale, the e-mail message comprising locations for response by the customer indicating his intention to order the product or service,

receiving from the customer an e-mail message that includes the response,

based on the received e-mail, automatically generating order information in a format usable automatically by an order fulfillment system to cause the order to be filled.

6. A machine-based method comprising analyzing an e-mail message to derive response information concerning a commercial transaction,

automatically identifying response information which requires resolution of an issue with the source of the e-mail message, and

1

2

3

4

1

2 3

1

2

3

5

6

8

1

2 3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

1/12. The method of claim 12 in which the piece comprises a marketing campaign or a marketing flight.

12 13. The method of claim 11 in which the inbound messages contain information that links them to the corresponding outbound messages, and the associating step uses the link information.

13 14. The method of claim 13 further comprising automatically parsing the inbound messages for order information.

A machine-based method comprising sending outbound e-mail messages associated with commercial transactions,

storing information related to each of the outbound messages in a database, the information being useful for completing the commercial transactions, the information not being contained in the outbound messages,

analyzing inbound e-mail messages that result from the outbound messages and that contain response information useful in completing the commercial transactions, and

automatically merging the response information with corresponding information in the database for use in completing the transactions.

A machine-based method comprising sending outbound e-mail messages associated with commercial transactions,

storing information related to each of the outbound messages in a database, the information being useful for completing the commercial transactions, the information not being contained in the outbound messages,

analyzing inbound e-mail messages that result from the outbound messages and that contain response information useful in completing the commercial transact ons,

automatically managing an e-mail dialog with the source to resolve the issue.

7. The method of claim 6 in which at least some of

the e-mail dialog is performed automatically.

8. Software guided interactive e-mail dialogs to resolve, on behalf of a vendor, customer issues that occur in direct response e-mails that are automatically identified as requiring a dialog.

9. A machine-based method comprising automatically sorting e-mail messages, based on response information contained in the messages, into e-mail messages that can be processed automatically to generate commercial transactions, e-mail messages in which the response information is inadequate to permit generation of commercial transactions, and e-mail messages that may be subjected to exception handling to yield information that is sufficient to generate commercial transactions.

10. A machine-based method comprising analyzing an e-mail message to derive response information concerning a commercial transaction, and automatically generating a confirmatory e-mail message to the source of the e-mail message confirming that the commercial transaction has been or will be completed.

11. A machine-based method comprising receiving inbound e-mail messages that result from corresponding outbound e-mail messages associated with a marketing program, the inbound messages containing response information, each of the outbound messages being associated with a distinct piece of the marketing program, and automatically associating the response information in each of the inbound messages with the corresponding distinct piece of the marketing program.

- 14 -

4

1

of the state of th

4

5

1

2

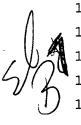
4

5

6

7

9



identifying inbound e-mail messages that cannot be processed automatically to generate the commercial transactions, and

using the database information to assist in exception handling of the identified inbound messages.

